

Cultural Resource Management



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Cultural Resources at Cape Cod National Seashore.

The Cape's prominent position in the Atlantic has long made it a key landmark for human habitation, and archaeological sites testify to over 9,000 years of occupation. By the 600s, the Wampanoag tribes used or inhabited all of the lands now contained within the national seashore and in 1620, the Pilgrims made their first landfall on the shores of the outer Cape. With European settlement, Cape Codders took to the sea, creating a dynamic whaling and fishing industry, as well as a long and famous tradition of shellfishing. The many lighthouses and Coast Guard stations that dot Cape shores reflect this heritage; the beauty and sense of solitude that they have come to represent continues to inspire artists and writers in what is now a centuries-old Cape Cod arts tradition.

Historic Structures

From lighthouses and life saving stations to dune shacks and original examples of the Cape Cod architectural style, the many historic structures within Cape Cod National Seashore serve as a tangible reminder of the region's rich human history. A total of 62 federally-owned buildings at the seashore are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and approximately 240 privately-owned historic buildings within park boundaries have been identified by the Historic American Buildings Survey. Ten of the federally-owned historic structures are open to the public for regularly-scheduled interpretive programs, including: the Atwood-Higgins complex, a nine-building homestead dating from the early eighteenth century; nineteenth-century whaling captain Edward Penniman's house and barn; the Old Harbor Life-saving Station; and the Highland, Nauset and Three Sisters lighthouses.

Due to funding shortages, adequate assessments of the condition and significance of many of CACO's historic structures have not been completed and, as a result, some have been destroyed or extensively altered. Maintenance and preservation efforts for nearly all of the park's historic buildings have also been severely hampered by a lack of funding, underscoring the need for increased public partnership in the stewardship of these valuable cultural resources.

Cultural Landscapes

Cape Cod National Seashore's varied vernacular landscapes are living illustrations of the traditional character of the outer Cape, and of Cape Codders' changing attitudes towards the land (and sea) around them. Although some of the seashore's significant cultural landscapes, such as the Pamet cranberry bog and the open fields of Fort Hill, have been identified for preservation, a comprehensive inventory of historic landscapes at CACO has never been completed. Without baseline information as to the location and significance of CACO's cultural landscapes, many may be lost. Because the form and value of these landscapes may be obscured as they evolve, even after the land itself has been designated for preservation, a comprehensive and scientifically sound management plan is also critically needed for the preservation of these historic resources.

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Archaeological Resources (including submerged sites)

From colonial tavern foundations to prehistoric garbage pits, archaeological sites on the outer Cape have contributed much to the historical record of human activity on Cape Cod. In addition to the seashore's numerous land-based archaeological sites, the waters off the coast of Cape Cod National Seashore also contain a unique wealth of submerged shipwreck sites. The Cape's prominence on the Eastern seaboard, coupled with its notoriously severe weather and ever-shifting offshore shoals, has been responsible for over 3,000 shipwrecks in 300 years of recorded history; from time to time, winter storms still unearth the weathered remains of old wrecks on the outer beach.

The complex nature of land ownership at CACO, both on- and offshore, can create quite a challenge for the preservation of outer Cape archaeological resources. Land ownership within park boundaries varies between the National Park Service, the state of Massachusetts, individual towns and private citizens. Thus, some of CACO's archaeological sites extend from federal onto private lands, with the potential for ground disturbance that could destroy or degrade the information contained at the sites. Additionally, shoreline retreat and a rising sea level are submerging land-based resources and changing the national seashore's offshore boundary (defined as 0.25 miles from the shoreline.) As a result, some significant submerged archaeological resources will eventually be outside the federal boundary and possibly open for salvage.

Although some research has been undertaken at CACO archeological sites, comprehensive inventories of archaeological resources within the park are still needed to prevent their loss or alteration; detailed attention should be given to sites where historic structure conservation could result in ground disturbance and to the offshore portions of National Register properties, while they are still under federal jurisdiction and relatively easy to locate.

Ethnography

The outer Cape possesses a unique heritage drawn from the culture of its original native peoples, the arrival of the Pilgrims and European settlers, the whaling and fishing industries, and from the many artists and writers who have been inspired by the stark beauty of Cape Cod. Cape Cod National Seashore was created in part to help preserve this heritage, and to celebrate it. In 1995, a preliminary ethnographic survey of the outer Cape identified several Cape Cod cultural communities, including Wampanoag, Portuguese and Cape Verdeans, and a number of customary Cape activities, including beachcombing, shellfishing, fishing, mushroom harvesting and berry picking.

A systematic, in-depth documentary study of the material and expressive culture of outer Cape Cod is still needed in order to gain a better understanding of what to preserve and foster within the park.

Cranberry Bog Restoration.

Background.

Once referred to as “red gold” by residents of Cape Cod, cranberry bogs are an integral part of the Cape’s cultural landscape. The indigenous fruit thrives in nutrient-poor,



acidic, waterlogged, sandy loam soils (Brownlow, 1979) like those on the outer Cape, and was an important staple for native Americans and early European settlers. In later years, the cranberry (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*) also became a vital source of vitamin C for ship-bound whalers and fishermen. Cultivation of the berry began on the Cape in the early nineteenth century, and cranberry bogs quickly grew into a valuable financial resource for nineteenth- and early

twentieth-century Cape Codders. Today, Cape Cod still produces ten percent of the state’s cranberry harvest, although no working commercial bogs currently exist within Cape Cod National Seashore. An abandoned bog in the upper reaches of the Pamet River valley that served as a commercial cranberry farm for several Cape Cod families from the 1800s through the 1950s could, however, provide a valuable glimpse into the area’s rich cultural and natural history if restored to working condition.

Research Needs.

Restoring the Pamet cranberry bog as a working example of the Cape’s cranberry industry also means altering the current vegetative regime and restoring the area’s earlier hydrology, which was altered by the construction of Route 6 and, more specifically, by the subsequent change in the level of the Pamet River. The water table in working bogs is controlled by extensive irrigation and drainage ditches, however, and restoration of these hydrological practices may in fact re-expose heavy metals used in the past as pesticides. The hydrology of this unique farmland needs to be analyzed to determine the extent of hydrologic restoration necessary, as well as the potential for toxic metals release. Based on this analysis, plans should be developed for managing the bog in a way that does not mobilize these metals. Research into the potential ecological impact of vegetation changes stemming from restoration is also needed.

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Vista Management.

Background.

When Cape Cod National Seashore was established in 1961, the early successional forest that dominated much of the outer Cape provided many views, vistas and overlooks that were incorporated into the design of many buildings and trails within the park. Facilities such as the Salt Pond and Province Lands Visitor Centers, the Hemenway and Pilgrim Springs overlooks and the Eastham and Provincetown bicycle trails were located to take advantage of these expansive



and splendid views, and to thereby foster a sense of public appreciation for the Cape's natural land- and seascapes. During the last forty years, growing vegetation has blocked many of the views afforded by the early forest. Specific views from visitor centers and some trails have been periodically maintained through the removal of trees and shrubs by work crews; in the absence of a long-term management plan, however, maintenance efforts have been sporadic and, in some cases, uninformed. In order to ensure that vista maintenance within the seashore is scientifically sound and executed on a regular basis, specific guidelines for vista maintenance and enhancement need to be outlined in a comprehensive management plan.

Research Needs.

Inventory Current and Historic Vistas: Creation of a Geographic Information Systems database showing current and documented historic vistas is needed to inform future management decisions regarding vista maintenance.

Develop Vista Management Plan: A vista management plan is needed which provides for the preservation of specific views developed by the original CACO planners, establishes criteria for the construction of new overlooks and prescribes methods for, and guidelines for the frequency of, routine vista maintenance.

Social Values Survey.



Background.

The essence of sustainable ecosystem management at Cape Cod National Seashore is the creation of a balance between its physical, biological and human elements; the goal is to provide opportunities for people to experience the outer Cape's incredible natural beauty while at the same time protecting its natural and cultural resources for generations to come. Since the conservation of the park's ecosystems requires the sustained participation of the people who visit them, information about the traditional and changing perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, needs and values of both local residents and park visitors is vital to successful, sustainable resource management. Indeed, the most powerful tool for resource protection is not the park boundary, but policies and reform that make conservation a matter of private and public interest.

Research Needs.

A social values survey documenting the demographics, knowledge, activities and attitudes of local citizens and park visitors towards CACO resource management practices is needed to develop effective, educational and politically and socially acceptable solutions to ecological problems that may be exacerbated (or resolved) by visitor actions. The study should, at a minimum, address the ecological role of fire in CACO's plant communities, salt marsh restoration, off-road vehicle use, threatened and endangered species, human disturbance to wildlife and vegetation, and the management of exotic or overabundant native plants and animals; additional objectives and content areas should be defined through careful review of the park's General Management Plan, consultation with CACO natural and cultural resources staff and outside natural and social scientists, and discussion with local citizens. In addition to addressing social response to park management, the study should also identify where and how best to apply environmental education efforts in order to effectively modify attitudes and behaviors of local residents and the park's recreational users for resource protection.

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